

What we claim is:

1. A method of providing specialized e-mail services to a sender, recipient or both, over
5 a communications network, said method comprising:
 - establishing an on-line session with a computer at an e-mail center;
 - sending an e-mail packet including an e-mail message to a recipient together with
a request for a specified verification e-mail service to the e-mail center;
 - transmitting the e-mail to an e-mail address accessible by a computer operated by
10 a recipient,
 - receiving notification when said recipient at least receives said e-mail; and
 - providing, by e-mail center, at least requested e-mail notification to said sender.
2. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said communication network comprises the
15 Internet.
3. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the user establishes a secure session with
computer at e-mail center.
- 20 4. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said session between the user and the e-
mail center requires specified software, and further comprising the step of loading specified
software on the computer operated by sender.
5. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said specialized e-mail services include at
25 least one specialized service selected from the group consisting of:
 - notification that e-mail was sent,
 - notification that e-mail was received,

12. The method as defined in claim 11, wherein sender's identity verification is obtained by checking sender's fingerprints.

13. The method as defined in claim 11, wherein sender's identity verification is
5 obtained by checking sender's voice.

14. The method as defined in claim 11, wherein sender's identity verification is obtained by checking sender's anatomical features.

10 15. The method as defined in claim 1, further comprising the step of verifying the identity of recipient and sending verification to e-mail center.

16. The method as defined in claim 15, further comprising sending verification of
15 identity of recipient to sender with transmitted e-mail.

17. The method as defined in claim 16, wherein recipient's identification verification is transmitted by the e-mail center to sender pursuant to sender's request.

18. The method as defined in claim 15, wherein verification is performed by use of
20 biometric device associated with e-mail recipient's computer.

19. The method as defined in claim 18, wherein recipient's identity verification is obtained by checking recipient's fingerprints.

25 20. The method as defined in claim 18, wherein recipient's identity verification is obtained by checking recipient's voice.

notification that e-mail was opened,
notification that e-mail was opened by intended recipient,
notification of time and/or date of receipt and/or opening of e-mail,
storage for future access of any selected notification information,
5 storage of e-mail message contents for future access,
verification of identity of sender,
verification of identity of recipient.

6. The method as defined in claim 5, further comprising transmitting by e-mail center
10 requested specialized e-mail service to e-mail sender.

7. The method as defined in claim 5, further comprising transmitting by e-mail center
requested specialized e-mail service to e-mail recipient.

8. The method as defined in claim 1, further comprising verifying the identity of sender
15 and sending verification to e-mail center.

9. The method as defined in claim 8, further comprising sending verification of identity
of sender to recipient with transmitted e-mail.

20 10. The method as defined in claim 9, wherein sender's identification verification is
transmitted by the e-mail center to recipient pursuant to recipient's request.

11. The method as defined in claim 8, wherein verification is performed by use of
25 biometric device associated with e-mail sender's computer.

21. The method as defined in claim 18, wherein recipient's identity verification is obtained by checking recipient's anatomical features.

22. The method as defined in claim 1, further comprising establishing by e-mail center
5 whether recipient has capability of establishing special e-mail service requested by sender; and prompting recipient to download necessary application software to provide requisite capability prior to sending sender's e-mail.

23. The method as defined in claim 1, further comprising establishing by e-mail center
10 whether recipient has capability of establishing verification of recipient's identity when such verification is requested by sender; and prompting recipient to establish such capability prior to sending sender's e-mail.

24. The method as defined in claim 5, wherein sender only requests selected
15 notification and/or verification, and notification and/or verification is provided to sender without storage of such notification and/or verification.

25. The method as defined in claim 5, wherein sender requests selected notification
and/or verification, and further comprising the steps of providing requested notification and/or
20 verification to sender and storing such requested notification and/or verification for future use and/or reference.

26. The method as defined in claim 25, wherein sender specifies the period of time for
which the requested notification and/or verification is to be stored.

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27. The method as defined in claim 5, wherein sender requests contents of e-mail message to be stored, and further comprising the step of storing contents of e-mail message for further use and/or reference.

5 28. The method as defined in claim 27, wherein sender specifies the period of time for which the requested notification and/or verification is to be stored. (Compare claim 26.)

29. The method as defined in claim 28, wherein recipient requests verification of identity of sender prior to opening of e-mail; and further comprising sending to recipient by e-mail center verification of identity of sender subsequent to transmission of e-mail to recipient.

30. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said e-mail packet is sent to a plurality of recipients in a predetermined class, any one of which can have access to the packet, and providing notification to the sender of the receipt of the packet by any intended recipient in the class.

31. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein said e-mail packet is sent to a single electronic address intended to be accessed by any one of a plurality of recipients in a predetermined class, and providing access only to entities with the class upon verification that the entity is a member of the class.

32. A method as defined in claim 31, wherein biometric verification is used to verify membership in the class.

33. An apparatus for providing specialized e-mail services to a sender, recipient or both, over a communications network, said apparatus comprising:

means for establishing an on-line session with a computer at an e-mail center;

means for sending by sender an e-mail packet including an e-mail message destined to a recipient together with a request for a specified verification e-mail service to the e-mail center;

5 means for transmitting from said e-mail computer the e-mail to an e-mail address accessible by a computer operated by a recipient,

means for receiving notification from said e-mail center when said recipient at least receives said e-mail; and

10 means for providing, by e-mail center, at least requested e-mail notification to said sender.

34. A method of transmitting information which contains a request for specified services on an e-mail system comprising:

connecting a sending computer to a communication network;

15 submitting said information from said sending computer to said communication network;

inputting said information onto a website server;

transmitting, by said website server, said information to a mail center;

receiving said information at said mail center;

20 creating a record of said information at said mail center;

storing said information by said mail center; and

sending an alert message to a receiving computer indicating that said information has been received.

25 35. The method of claim 34, further comprising inputting said information into a software program on said website server that interprets said information.

36. The method of claim 34, further comprising storing said record on a data storage system.

37. The method of claim 34, further comprising utilizing a Uniform Resource Locator in said alert message to point said receiving computer to said mail center to access said information.

38. The method of claim 37, further comprising retrieving said information by utilizing said Uniform Resource Locator.

39. The method of claim 34 wherein said information includes an authentication database.

40. The method of claim 39 further comprising confirming by said mail center that receiving computer has received said information.

41. A method for transmitting information that contains a request for specified services from an e-mail service comprising:

composing information on a sending computer;

sending said information, which includes an authentication database, to a software program on said sending computer;

comparing said authentication database with a database on said sending computer;

sending said information from said sending computer to a mail center;

processing said information at said mail center; and

sending said information from said mail center to a receiving computer.

42. The method of claim 41, further comprising authenticating said receiving computer.

43. The method of claim 41, further comprising retrieving said message from said
5 software program.

44. The method of claim 41, further comprising utilizing said mail center to authenticate
said receiving computer.

10 45. The method of claim 43 further comprising confirming by said mail center that
receiving computer has received said information.